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ABSTRACT

Dropout rates for Hispanic students are approximately twice those of white Anglo students. This paper reviews the literature on dropout and examines the effects of self-esteem, career and school expectations, family structure, and English language proficiency on the Hispanic youth's decision to drop out. A questionnaire was completed by 139 Hispanic students in an urban Phoenix high school and a rural high school outside of Phoenix. For both samples, the mean age was 16.5 years and most subjects: (1) were male; (2) came from intact families; (3) had parents with low educational attainment; and (4) spoke some Spanish at home. Thirty percent of total subjects reported Spanish as the primary home language. Over 70% of both urban and rural students felt that the following factors contributed to dropping out: family problems, drugs, alcohol, pregnancy, entrance into military, and attendance problems. The urban sample cited family problems, money problems, employment, expulsion, and attendance problems significantly more often than did rural students, while rural students gave more importance to language problems and illness than did urban students. Risk of dropping out was significantly related to having a dropout sibling and to poor school adjustment. Low positive relationships were found between remaining in school and both self-esteem and use of English at home. Remaining in school was not related to level of parental supervision, career expectations, parental work status, parental marital status, sex, or year in school. This report contains 100 references. (SV)

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HISPANIC YOUTH DROPOUT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The problem of noncompletion of school regardless of ethnicity is a serious problem faced by our educational institutions. A national study determined that one in four high school students drops out before graduation. THe dropout rates for Hispanics are approximately twice that of white students. Recognizing the complexities of this phenomenon, we propose an exploratory study to examine variables that possibly are related to a Hispanic youth's decision to drop out. This study is based on a sample population of Hispanic students from rural and urban high school systems in Arizona. A questionnaire was used to generate data which established a profile for both "at risk" students and "stable" students. The data was measured on both a descriptive and inferential level. A discussion is included which examines some of the alternatives available to our educational institutions for decreasing a Hispanic student's decision to drop out.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our appreciation to the Educational Boards of Phoenix Union High School and Eloy for allowing us to conduct our study on Hispanic dropout. The students of both Carl Hayden and Eloy High Schools were cooperative participants throughout the completion of the questionnaire. We hope that this exploratory study will provide awareness of some of the issues surrounding Hispanic dropout.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Introduction	1
Literature Review	2
Analysis	2
Self-Esteem	4
Career Expectations	5
School Adjustment	6
Family Structure	8
Language	9
Hypotheses	11
Methods	12
Sample	12
Discussion of Questionnaire	13
Definition of Scales	15
Results	17
Rural Frequencies	17
Urban Frequencies	18
Comparison of Urban and Rural Frequencies	19
Table 1 "Perceptions of Dropout"	21
Pearson Correlations	23
Other Statistics	25
Alternatives	25
Conclusion/Discussions	29
Limitations	29
Summary of Statistics	29
Discussion	30
References	33
Appendix	41

Introduction

The problem of noncompletion of school regardless of race/ethnicity is a serious problem faced by our educational institutions. A national study determined that one in four high school students drops out before graduation. "In urban schools, the dropout rate is 40% overall, 80% for Puerto Ricans, and 85% for American Indians." (Dan Sperling, USA Today). The dropout rates for Hispanics are about twice that for white students.

In particular, Phoenix has a problem with the education of its youth. The Phoenix Union High School District is faced with an alarming rate of youths dropping out. For the school year 1983-84, the district had an 18.8% dropout rate. Total high school dropout for Arizona in 1983-1984 was 15,398 students, of which 23.5% were Hispanic.

According to the Bureau of the Census (1980) there were 226,645,806 persons in the United States. Of this figure, approximately 66.3% were high school graduates. The national Hispanic population was estimated at 14,588,876. Of this total, dropout rates of 1980 high school sophomores represented 18% Hispanic. The only race exceeding the dropout rate of the Hispanic population were the American Indians, estimated at 29%.

Recognizing the complexities of this phenomena, an exploratory study was designed to examine variables related to Hispanic youths' decision to drop out of school. It is clear that Hispanic dropout in the Phoenix area has become a major problem. The problem is even greater when one considers that dropout rates do not take into account Hispanic youths who fail to register for high school.

Dropout can lead to unemployment and lowered socioeconomic status. Youths between 16 and 21 account for over 40% of all unemployed Americans. The greatest problem is with high school dropouts who are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates. This study of Hispanic dropouts has national implications due to the increase of the Hispanic population. By the year 2000 1/5 of the U.S. population will be Hispanic. That means, given dropout rates, that a significant proportion of U.S. youths will be "at risk" for dropout. On a local level this study is timely, given that the Phoenix Union High School District has recently developed a task force to study the problem and is currently seeking proposals that address strategies for decreasing the rate of Hispanic dropout.

The purpose of this research study is to examine four variables which may play a significant role in a Hispanic youth's decision to drop out of school. The variables of interest are as follows: (a) self-esteem, (b) career and school expectations, (c) family structure, and (d) language. We intend to examine the relationships of these variables to determine their association with Hispanic high school student dropout rates. The students that will participate in this study will be identified as either "at risk" or "stable" students. We are assuming that those students we identify as stable will remain in school and complete the requirements for graduation.

Literature Review

Analysis

Our review of the literature concerning the dropout problem finds two flaws:

1. Although numerous studies have examined dropout factors, none of them have specifically addressed the Hispanic student dropout.
2. Many studies look to the victim as the problem.

Traditionally, dropout has been considered from an individual perspective, blaming the dropout and his or her family of origin rather than understanding how the student fits into a complex web of interrelated institutions and values. In current educational philosophy, educators have substituted the theory of cultural deprivation for the biological determinism concept (Carter, 1970). Inherent in the theory of cultural deprivation is the idea that the child must change to fit the educational system, when in actuality, the system may need to meet them "half-way." Of course, schools cannot be expected to single-handedly eliminate racism in society and assure good jobs for skilled personnel. However, if certain factors indicate predisposition toward dropout for the individual student, perhaps education institutions could refocus their programs in a way which would help Mexican-Americans compete in an urban industrial job market, having completed educationally relevant programs. Dropout is considered most logically as the interrelationship of cultural, home, and school factors as they affect the total environment for the Mexican-American. In the review of the literature, the interrelationship of these factors (self-esteem; career expectations; school adjustment; family structure including work, educational, and marital status of parents; educational status of brothers and sisters; home supervision; and language) seem to affect a student's decision to remain in school.

Self-esteem

A review of the literature suggests that high levels of self-esteem are positively related to academic success. Carter, et.al. (1970) in a study on Mexican-Americans in school suggests that social, economic, and educational environments of Mexican-Americans are the principal determinants of low educational and social positions of Mexican-Americans. This educational environment is affected not only by the school policies and programs, but also home and family environment. Trowbridge (1972) administered the Coopersmith Inventory to elementary students and found, in general, lower SES children have high self-concept scores. However, no significant differences were found on the basis of race, sex, age, and density, although other races were not well represented. Coopersmith (1967) also did not find major ethnic differences in the area of self-esteem. Instead he reported that self-esteem scores are significantly related to creativity, academic achievement, resistance to group pressures and family adjustment; all factors which can contribute positively to school success.

Hepner (1974) found that Mexican-American boys, even though underachieving in school, do not seem to perceive themselves more negatively than do their Anglo peers, or even their higher achieving peers. Contrary to many of education's perceptions, Mexican-American boys, even if underachieving in school, do not have low self-esteem, nor are there noticeable discrepancies between their real and ideal selves. Mexican-American underachievers were the most significantly different in self-concepts and value orientations from the Anglo-American boys in this study.

Demo and Williams' study (1983) reported that self-esteem is related to academic skill level in pre-adolescence. The development of competent academic skills seems to be a factor in the development of self-confidence in the pre-adolescent student. Demo and Williams also reported that self-esteem increases with each grade level and that social class of the parents affects self-esteem in the older students as reflected by parents' occupational levels. Based on this study, it is assumed that self-esteem is related to academic skills and career expectations.

Career Expectations.

Our hypothesis that career ambiguity and/or a perceived lack of relationship between school and chosen career could be contributing factors for early Hispanic dropout centers around the literature. "A reoccurring theme is that an individual chooses an occupation which permits the individual to function in a role consistent with his or her self-concept" (Rosenthal, et al, 1979, p. 459). A landmark study conducted by Barrett and Tinsley (1977) showed that self-concept is related to career choices in another way. Controlling for choosing a career to fit self-concept, they found that career choice is affected by "one's ability to see self and the alternatives available. People do not choose careers to fit their level of 'self-esteem' but rather they choose careers according to their perceptions of alternatives." Thus, if a student perceived his only options to be low-level laborers' positions, he may be more likely to drop out of school, because he wouldn't need school to obtain his career goals.

Career salience or the relative importance of a career in one's total life is another key factor in career expectations. If a person values a career and his education will help him achieve these career goals, he is

more likely to stay in school (Greenhaus, 1977). Although Neal (1972) states that parents and counselors have little affect on educational goals, but expectations and future plans and goals, other authors strongly suggest that parents and teachers can affect a teen's job expectations and therefore his decision whether or not to stay in school. Rosenthal (1979) and Lawrence and Brown (1976) both emphasize the power of role models in choosing a career and staying in school. This literature suggests that a youth with career expectations that are important and are consistent with staying in school and parents who both work and have achieved educationally will be more likely to stay in school.

School Adjustment

School adjustment also seems to play a part in the student's decision to stay in school. Understanding a student's attitudes towards school is a complex process involving the interaction between the school system and the student. Several recent studies have focused on this factor as important in determining whether a student remains in school (Martin, 1981; Bassin, 1982; and Noth & O'Neil, 1981). In the Martin (1981) study, the interface between school and student was measured by four scales which included students' perceptions of the following: (a) how well their educational needs were being met, (b) the quality of their relationship with their teachers, (c) their relationship to other students, and (d) their locus of control. Given the constraints of our thesis project, we have chosen to use only the first two measures to predict student attitudes towards school.

Research has shown that between 20% to 40% of secondary school students feel they are wasting their time in school (Martin, 1981). This is

in part due to being bored with school, (California School Board Association, 1980). The Oregon study (1980) found that school dropouts aren't necessarily bored with education in general, rather they are bored with what seems to them a lack of correlation between their plans and school. Abram and Cobb (1979) found that the number one reason for dropping out among those they surveyed was that school wasn't teaching them what they wanted to know. The Phoenix Union Report (Donis, et al., 1980) states that "recent surveys indicate that young people today are more oriented towards immediate job prospects rather than the benefits of a long education" (p. 4). The importance of relating school to future opportunities is verified by the recommendations of prevention studies (Martin, 1981; Bassin, 1982) which included instituting career information, job placement, and preparation for employment.

Timmons and Wolsh (1980) found that teachers' expectations affect involvement with school and the student's attitudes about whether to stay. When Abram and Cobb (1978-1979) asked dropouts the open-ended question of what might have kept them in school, they responded: special teachers and more help from regular teachers. In addition, the California School Board Association (1982) in its report, "How to keep Students in School and Make Them Want to Stay There," emphasized the consistent preference for administrators and personnel who were more caring and involved.

Brophy (1974) studied the child-teacher dyad and importance of these interactions on school performance. The increase of verbal and non-verbal positive interactions can positively affect students' performance. This dyad becomes particularly important when viewed within the context of the

relationship between self-esteem and positive role modeling of a significant other.

Family Structure

Hispanics are also affected by factors other than the school. The literature available on Hispanic family structure and its impact on the high school student's decision to remain in school is complex. The family's interactions and the presence of extended family members within the local community have a direct influence on the student's level of academic completion (Kimball, 1968). Support of education increases in the Mexican-American family as the social class ranking rises from the lower to upper classes (Saunders, 1954, p. 79-87). Educational achievement or level of grade completion are also observed to increase with the number of generations, from the lowest interest in the first immigrant generations, to higher levels of interest with each succeeding generation, (Thunston, 1957, p. 201-203).

Rosen (1959) cited that achievement motivation was highly related to ethnicity and social class. Wolf (1969) has suggested that the relationship between social and school performance may be due to child-rearing practices and family interaction patterns that are related to the social class of the family. Hispanic individuals have been generally found to be oriented towards persons rather than ideas or abstractions; this orientation may produce conflict/confusion for a student who does not identify with any of the school personnel. Dieppa and Montiel (1978) also found that Hispanic family systems place a heavy emphasis on the father as the main authority figure. What are the implications for a single-parent family head of

household and their children's success in school if the father figure is always absent?

Language

Another factor mentioned in the literature is language usage. Milner (1951) found, for example, that the verbal interaction between the child and his parents has a significant effect on the development of his ability to read in the first grade. Minority individuals must learn to function in two environments; their own culture and that of the mainstream society (De Anda, 1984). The author expounds on the cultural deficit model and the formulation of a bi-cultural mode. This conceptualization proposed that norms and cultural pattern of minority groups that varied from those of the majority culture were for the most part deviant and destructive and led to a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and deprivation.

It has been noted that with the nation becoming increasingly more culturally pluralistic, it's important that we examine the complex factors affecting the interface between the white majority and ethnic minorities. Minority students must learn to function in two environments; their own culture and that of mainstream society (De Anda, 1984). Social class has consistently demonstrated to be an important correlate of both achievement and achievement motivation. Wolf (1964) suggests that this relationship may be due to child rearing practices and family interaction patterns that are related to the social class of the family.

Bernstein (1960) studied the relationship between language development and social class. According to his observations, children from middle-class homes speak a well-developed formal language, whereas lower-class children speak in a vernacular comprised of short incomplete

sentences. This differential language facility affects their intellectual development, academic performance, and socialization processes.

De Anda (1984) elaborated on the importance of language in assimilation. She states, "The extent of an individual's proficiency in the language of a particular culture can either enhance or impede the socialization process. That is, an individual conversant in the language is more likely to be exposed to a greater number of modes and mediators and to a wide range of learning situations" (p. 106). Furthermore, De Anda states that a large percentage of ethnic minority persons are probably not coordinate bilinguals--that is, they do rot display equal facility in both languages.

Coker (1981) stated that language is the most important manifestation of one's self. If the school rejects the mother tongue for an entire group of children, this will effect seriously and adversely those concepts they have regarding themselves, their parents, their homes, etc. The effect of language was demonstrated in a study by Steinberg (1982). He reports a relationship between drop-out factors and minority youth who speak a different language. "There is clear evidence that academic achievement is lower among students who are less proficient in English" (p. 34).

Cultural deprivation was the single most mentioned causal factor for dropping out of high school. Cosca and Jackson (1974) found that teachers themselves praised or encouraged Anglo students 35% more than they did Chicanos, accepted or used Anglo ideas 40% more than they did those of Chicanos, and directed 21% more questions to Anglos than to Chicanos. This inequality compounds the struggle the minority student is facing already. Hirano-Nakanishi (1982) cited negative interactions of Mexican-American students with their Anglo teachers. He identified

students at risk of dropping out as coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, Mexican-American and were language minorities (p. 3).

Jaramillo (1984) cited that students of Hispanic origin generally entered high school with educational and career aspirations as high as other groups, but end up unable to pursue their goals. He concluded that the mismatch between the high aspirations and intentions with low achievement of so many leads inescapably to the conclusion that something is dreadfully wrong.

An individual who drops out of school is influenced by many factors, both external and internal. It may not be possible to explore every facet of an individual's decision to drop out of school. However, it should be possible to isolate some factors which predispose certain individuals toward dropping out and others toward remaining in school.

As mentioned previously, two separate groups of students will be identified: a stable group and a group "at risk" based upon self-reported absences. After a review of the literature, we have arrived at a set of variables which may influence the decision to drop out, including these factors: self-esteem, career expectations, school adjustment, family structure, home supervision and language.

Hypotheses

A positive relationship is expected between the student's decision to remain in school and the following variables:

(a) student's level of self-esteem

(b) student's level of school adjustment

(c) high career expectations that are salient with school curriculum

(d) parents who are both employed

(e) high educational level for both parents

(f) coming from an intact or remarried household

(g) high level of supervision from the home

(h) brothers and sisters finishing school

(i) using English as the primary language at home and at school.

Using our hypotheses, it is possible to construct a stable student and an "at risk" student profile.

Single parent family	Work status	Spanish is primary language
Low levels of parental supervision	At Risk Student	Sibling dropout
Low self-esteem	Low career expectations	Poor school adjustment

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Work status	Intact family	English is primary language
Increased levels of parental supervision	Stable Student	Sibling completes high school
High self-esteem	High career expectations	Good school adjustment

Methods

Sample

The sample population of this study was drawn from two separate high schools in the state of Arizona. An eighty-item questionnaire was administered to a selected, non-random sample of high school students by graduate students from Arizona State University. Two schools were chosen from the high schools in the metropolitan Phoenix area and the

rural community surrounding Phoenix. The schools were selected because they have a significant number of full-time Hispanic students. To be included in this study, all subjects had to be students carrying four or more classes and be of Hispanic origin. The first sample is composed of 102 full-time students in one urban high school in West Phoenix. The sample represents both female and male students of five junior English classes. The age range was from 15 to 20 years in age. All Hispanic students that attended class on the day the questionnaire was administered completed the questionnaire.

The second sample was composed of 51 fill-time Hispanic students attending one rural Arizona high school. The sample represents both female and male students of three senior English classes. The age range was from 15 to 19 years of age. All Hispanic students that attended one of the three senior English classes on the day the questionnaire was administered completed the questionnaire.

Questionnaire[1]

The first four items measured demographic characteristics of the subjects surveyed. These characteristics included age, sex, ethnicity, and year in school. Self-esteem was measured by using the Coopersmith Self-Esteem scale. Self-esteem is defined as the score derived from the total number of positive self-esteem perceptions on the inventory. Coopersmith (1967) tested his self-esteem inventory for test-retest reliability after a five-week interval with a sample of 30 fifth grade children. The reliability was .88 and the reliability after 3 years with a different sample

[1]See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.

of 56 children was .70 (p. 10). The shorter form of the inventory which we will be using correlates .86 with the longer form.

The subjects were questioned about their career expectations, using a subscale of nine items. There should be a positive correlation between these items and those who are "stable" students in respect to dropping out. Students who value success in work, community leadership, and steady employment, are defined as having focused career plans that require education for their realization. A positive correlation might be expected between the students who place a high value on these plans and those who are "not at risk" for dropout, because of the perceived relevance of school to the completion of these goals. We shall consider the career questions as two sets of questions, one career-oriented and one family-oriented. Conversely, the independent variable of marriage expectations is related to questions 45, 46, and 47, all of which measure family-oriented plans. All of these questions have two response sets, (important, and not important), and the numbers will be totalled and the response sets summed. In this way, an indication of a career or a family orientation may emerge. Then this orientation, (career or family), will be compared with dropout to see if a correlation exists.

School adjustment was measured by a series of nine items on the questionnaire that examined subjects' satisfaction level with their personal educational progress, discipline at school, safety at school, and job readiness after completion of high school. A student's potential risk for absences from school may be directly related to the variables of school adjustment.

Family structure was measured in terms of parents' work, educational and marital status. In addition, we asked whether or not other siblings in the family had remained in school. Home supervision related to three questions relating to parents being aware of the student's school performance.

The relationship between a subject's primary language in the home versus the language used in educational and social interactions with peers is inversely correlated. When the language spoken by the role models within the family structure differs from the language used in the educational system, we can assume decreased positive school adjustment. The subjects were questioned about their fluency in Spanish and the frequency of use of their language, both at home and at school.

Dropout risk was calculated by two questions, one concerning average number of days absent per week, and another asking an average of number of periods absent per day. These questions were based on the Phoenix Union High School District's criteria for dropping students on the basis of absences.

Definition of Scales.

We constructed the following scales for analyzation of Pearson Correlation Tables and Crosstables.

Self-esteem is defined as Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. Items: 52-78.

Career expectations is defined by job after school, student's decision about marriage after school, does student have a job lined up after school, being successful in work, finding the right person to marry, living close

to relatives, children after school, and leadership in community. Items: 30, 37, 45, 5=46, 47, 48, 49, and 50.

School adjustment is defined by a condition of following items: (a) student's satisfaction with his education, (b) interest in school, (c) school attendance, (d) school safety and supervision, and (e) discipline in school. Items: 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36.

Work status is defined as having at least one parent successfully employed full-time. Items: 8, 9

Educational status is defined by the combined score of the number of years both parents have completed. Items: Nos. 10 and 11.

Supervision is defined as parents plus male guardian, plus female guardian being aware of the student's school performance. Items: 18, 19, and 20.

Language is defined as students and family speaking Spanish often in the home. Items: 12 and 13.

Drop Risk is defined as the students' number of days absent per week, and the number of classes missed by the student per day. Items: 27 and 28.

These scales are considered interval level measurements due to scaling of the items. Response to questions contained within each scale were assigned numerical values and added together to produce a numerical value for each scale which was then compared to the dependent variable of Drop Risk which is also an interval level measurement composed of a drop risk scale. Correlations were used to examine the hypothesized relationships between the variables.

Results

Rural

In the rural sample population there were 37 Hispanic students. The mean age for the sample population was 16.6 years of age. The sample included 65% males with 35% females. Forty-eight percent of the population were sophomores, 8% were juniors, and 43% were seniors.

The medium number of people in the home was five. Twenty-nine families were representative of a nuclear familiar system, and eight families were classified as being extended family systems. Fifty-nine percent of the students' parents were married, and only 13% came from divorced homes.

Eight-two percent of the fathers were employed as compared with 40% of the mothers. Almost 60% of the mothers reported to have an eighth grade education or less, with 29% finishing high school. The frequencies indicated that 40% of the fathers had completed an eighth grade education or less, with 35% completing high school.

About 18% of the rural students reported to be fluent in Spanish and 59% reported to speak Spanish often in the home. Overall, 73% of the rural students reported to speak some Spanish in the home.

As with the urban students, there was a consensus between the students' expectations for graduation and the parents' expectations to graduate from high school. There was a similar percentage consensus among their peers.

Only 30% of the rural students expressed an interest in college or vocational-trade school. Seventy-eight percent of the students reported to

have been satisfied with their education. About 1/4 of these students expressed an interest in obtaining a full-time job after high school.

About 73% of the rural students reported that familial problems related to dropout. Fifty-six percent reported financial related problems as contributing to dropout.

Urban

The urban section of our study included 130 students, 102 of which were Hispanic. The following frequencies will relate only to the urban Hispanics. The mean age for the sample population was 16.5 years. Fifty-one percent of sample population were male and 47% were females. Over 3/4 of the sample population were in their junior year of high school.

The medium number of people in the home was five. In the sample population the highest percentage of students came from a nuclear family. Sixty-seven percent represented a nuclear family system and 35% were composed of extended family systems. Over 2/3 of the students reported that their parents were married, and about 20% came from a broken homes.

Over 79% of fathers were employed either full-time or part-time. Twenty-nine percent of the fathers of the sample reported to have graduated from high school, and 53% reported to have completed an eighth grade education or less. Thirty-three percent of the mothers reported to have completed high school, and 56% had education of eighth grade or less.

Over 3/4 of the urban students reported speaking some Spanish in the home, and close to 30% of the group reported to speak Spanish always in the home. Overall, 80% of the students reported to speak some Spanish

There was a percentage consensus between the students' and parents' expectations for the student to graduate from high school. Also noted was

a percentage consensus among the students' expectation to graduate and the students' peers' expectations for that student.

Fifty-eight percent of the students expressed an interest in enrolling in college or vocational trade school. Fifteen percent of the students reported an interest in obtaining full-time employment after graduating from high school. Over 50% of the students reported to be satisfied with their education.

Comparison

The frequencies of the rural and urban samples indicated some similarities between the two populations. The mean age of the subjects for the rural file was 16.6 and the urban mean age was 16.5 years old. Both samples had more males than females in the total sample. In both cases the medium number of people in the home was five. These combined samples had a 3 to 1 occurrence of nuclear family structures to extended family structures. The percentage of intact marriages for both sample populations was over 50%. The percentage of divorced family systems was under 20%. Since our sample population reflected a higher percentage of intact family systems, we can assume that our statistical results will profile a higher percentage of stable students based on our hypothesis that intact families positively influence a student's decision to remain in school. The language frequencies for both samples indicate that over 30% of the subjects reported Spanish as their primary language at home. Three fourths of both samples reported speaking some Spanish in the home. There was an overall positive consensus between the parents' expectations for the students to graduate, the peers' expectations for that student to graduate and the students' expectations to graduate.

The educational level for families was low for both the rural and urban sample. The overall educational level for both sexes indicated that a large percentage of the parents had only completed eighth grade educations or less.

The following section presents graphs comparing the urban and rural frequencies of responses to the question, "What do you think causes dropout?" There were some similarities between the two groups, but it appears that pregnancy and attendance problems are seen as more of a potential for dropping out by urban students than rural students

There are several areas where a significant different exists between urban and rural students' perceptions of what causes dropout. We compared the means of the urban and rural samples responses to the question "What factors contribute to dropout?" (which was followed by several categories that students could check or leave blank) with a t-test. Statistically significant differences at the .05 level for a two-tailed test were found in these areas: family problems, money, employment, expulsion or suspension, attendance, language, and illness. The urban sample (n = 102) found family problems, money, employment, expulsion or suspension, and attendance as more important than the rural sample for contributing to dropout. The rural sample (n = 51) found language and illness as significantly more important than the urban sample for contributing to dropout. For supportive statistics of means, standard deviations and t-values, please see the following table.

Table 1: Comparisons of Students' (Urban/ Rural) Perceptions of Contributing Factors Associated with Dropping Out

Variables	School Location: Urban			Rural			t-Values
	% Yes Resp	Mean	S.D.	% Yes Resp	Mean	S.D.	
Family Problems	80.4	1.196	.399	70.3	1.865	.631	-8.06
Clothes	17.6	1.824	.383	13.5	1.865	.347	.645
Friends Dropping Out	53.6	1.461	.501	59.5	1.405	.498	.65
Looks/Appearance	17.6	1.824	.383	8.1	1.919	.277	1.58
Money Problems	82.7	1.373	.486	43.2	1.568	.502	-2.32
Drugs	86.3	1.137	.346	78.4	1.216	.417	-1.25
Alcohol	77.5	1.225	.420	70.3	1.297	.463	-.97
Language Problems	16.7	1.833	.375	27.0	1.730	.450	3.75
Employment/ Work	49.8	1.402	.493	32.4	1.676	.475	3.29
Pregnancy (Females)	90.2	1.089	.286	86.5	1.135	.347	- .875
Marriage	52.9	1.465	.501	45.9	1.541	.505	.885
Illness or Disability	28.4	1.713	.455	43.2	1.514	.559	2.37
Military	77.5	1.824	.383	70.3	1.784	.479	56
School too Strict	39.2	1.608	.491	29.7	1.703	.463	1.15
Moved Too Far From School	23.5	1.765	.426	24.3	1.703	.520	.789
Expelled or Suspended	79.4	1.206	.406	64.9	1.351	.484	-2.7
Attendance Problems	86.3	1.317	.346	70.3	1.297	.463	-2.4

Table 1 (Continued)

Variables	School Location: Urban % Yes Resp	Urban Mean	Urban S.D.	Rural % Yes Resp	Rural Mean	Rural S.D.	t-Values
Couldn't Get Along with Other Students	48.0	1.520	.502	43.2	1.568	.502	.559
Couldn't Get Along with Staff	56.9	1.406	.513	43.2	1.243	.435	.185
School Grounds Were Dangerous	11.8	1.951	.776	24.3	1.757	.435	1.66

Pearson Correlations

When testing for strength of relationship using the Pearson r, no strong correlations showed up. Some relationships, however, were observed.

A low positive relationship, (Pearson = .1311, P = .125) between remaining in school and self-esteem was predicted on the basis of our hypothesis. We assume that as an individual student remains in school, he could be expected to elevate his self-esteem. His interaction with the school is probably fairly healthy so that his educational success enhances his self-esteem which in turn adds impetus to his educational progress in a healthy synergy. This finding is supposed by Coopersmith himself (1976). However, a probability level of .125 indicates that the relationship is due to chance.

Similarly, a "low positive" relationship exists between school adjustment and ability to complete school (r = .2903; P = .002). Since a probability of .002 is significant, this correlation supports both hypotheses which state that a student's decision to remain in school is related to his adjustment to the school, which is a combination of his attitude toward school, his disciplinary history, and his level of security at school.

A "very low positive" relationship emerged between the use of English as a primary language and a student's attendance ability (r = .1440, P = .074). This result combined with frequency percentages suggested that we cannot make a prediction about a student's decision to remain in school based upon his primary language.

The variable which showed the highest correlations was supervision (Pearson .3449; P = .189.) There is a low positive relationship between

drop risk and supervision. However, this may be due to chance given the P value is greater than .05. Increased levels of parental supervision are related to the stable student profile, however, this relationship is not supported statistically.

A significant relation was found between a student's brother or sister dropping out and the student's risk to drop out ($r = .2264$; $P = .012$). This result suggests the power of role-modeling between siblings.

Career expectations showed no relationship to dropout ($r = -.0017$; $P = .493$). The relationship between career expectations and dropout is counter to our hypothesis. Higher career expectations should suggest a greater commitment to school and a lower expectation of dropout.

The work status of the parents, (a combination of mother and father's work status) had no significant relationship to dropout ($r = .0072$; $P = .474$). Our hypothesis predicted that a higher parental work status would be reflected in less absences for the students. But no significant relationship was noted.

Marital status revealed a negative relationship to dropout ($r = .0895$; $P = .193$), although not statistically significant. Apparently there is an inverse relationship between dropout and intact families, but since the relationship is weak and non-significant, no conclusion can be made.

Summarizing the results of the pearson correlations, some positive relationships, (low or very low) exists between a student's school adjustment level and his likelihood of staying in school. A statistically significant relationship also exists between likelihood of dropout and a pattern of sibling dropout. Some other relationships were suggested, although they were not statistically significant. For example, a low positive relationship

is suggested between remaining in school and self-esteem, use of English in the home and remaining in school.

Several findings in the correlational analysis were not expected, especially the relationship of career expectations and marital status. These also were not statistically significant.

Other Statistics

Interwoven with career expectations was an expectation on our part that Hispanic females would be more likely to drop out than Hispanic males due to expectations of marriage and family rather than career. We found, however, by comparing the means of each sex with a t-test that this is not the case, males ($n = 49$) had a mean of 2.65 and a S.D. of .75, and females ($n = 47$) had a mean of 2.82 and a S.D. of .86, giving a t value of -1.06, 90 df, $p < .29$. There was no statistically significant difference between males and females who were at risk for dropout.

In addition, we tested to see if year in school may have an effect on students dropping out. We found, however, that there was not a statistically significant relationship between year in school and drop risk, as shown by these statistics based on an ANOVA, $F = (1,4) = .45$, $p < .77$. Therefore, year in school is not a predictor for dropout.

Alternatives

What can be done to prevent dropout? Several approaches are available. The Phoenix Union High School District has instituted a number of alternative schools to serve the needs of dropouts and potential dropouts in the city. These include Alhambra Extended Program, Bostrom Alternative Center for Education, Continuing Education Center, North Alternative

High School, Cyesis Center and Opportunity Halls. In addition in 1980 Phoenix Union High School District conducted and put together a special report on the dropout problem which consisted of an overview of job opportunities available for students who choose to drop out of high school. This information was condensed and put into pamphlet form to be distributed to students. Despite these efforts, dropout in the Phoenix Union Union High School District remains high at 18.8% for the 1983-84 year. Approximately ¼ of these students are Hispanic. Even more troubling, these figures fail to account for the number of students who drop out between 8th grade and entrance into high school, which is the time that Hispanic youth in Phoenix are at the highest risk for dropout. It seems to be a trend for Hispanic youth never to register for high school, which means that the figures cited may not reflect the entire scope of the problem.

The Phoenix Union High School District is continuing its efforts to combat dropout. Last year they instituted a dropout task force to study the problem. We hope that this survey and its results will facilitate their efforts. First of all, it's important to realize that most students value education as was shown in our survey. Seventy-eight percent of the Hispanic students surveyed said they were interested in school. This figure is corroborated by the Phoenix Union study that found the majority of dropouts surveyed valued education and wanted to continue their education. Our literature review revealed several innovative and potentially helpful approaches for helping the potential dropout stay in school.

Several studies reviewed (Abram & Cobb at Kentucky, 1978-79; Greater Victoria and Oregon Department of Education, and Hodges at Lane

Community College, 1982) emphasized the importance of teacher expectations, relationship with teachers and the student's need for more help from teachers. Bassin (1982) suggests intensive training programs for teachers, teaching them how to become encouragers for the importance of the teacher-student dyad. Brophy (1974) found that teacher attitudes (verbal and non-verbal) greatly affect student's performance in the classroom. Cooper (1977) went on to show that teachers tend to give greater percentage of criticism to low-expectation students in an attempt to gain control over timing and content. This great percentage of criticism and control decreased motivation and performance in students. There were ways that teachers would improve their role as encouragers. Given this information, it might be helpful for Phoenix Union to target classrooms for coding teacher-student interactions with Brophy's coding method to determine if there were ways that teachers could improve their role as encouragers. As our survey indicates, 50% of the kids say their interaction with teachers as problematic and potentially contributing to dropout.

Barber and Jensen (1978) suggest the need for teachers and administrators to be aware of high risk dropout times and to institute strategies to retain students during these times--between eighth grade and high school as is clearly indicated in the Phoenix Union District. This is the time that could be targeted to prevent dropout from occurring. Peak dropout times during the year could be targeted from the statistics kept on this area and preventive policies could be instituted before these peak times.

Martin (1981) suggests using a survey such as ours to identify characteristics of potential dropouts and then constructing a matrix of

factors to predict dropout. Teachers and/or attendance personnel could fill out the matrix for students targeting potential school leavers and institute support groups or networking between teachers to prevent that student from dropping. Hodges (1982) emphasizes the need for personal contact with students in trouble. He suggests organized student support programs of kids helping other kids to stay in school. He also emphasizes the need to involve parents or surrogates in the school processes to make them feel included, which makes sense from a systems perspective as discussed by Garbarino (1983). Garbarino says that it also makes sense given the cultural context of the Hispanic student body whose family is an extremely important predictor of how well the student does in school. Three percent of those students surveyed expectations matched their parents' expectations. If the link between school and families could be strengthened, families would probably be more supporting of their children staying in school.

Much of what has been addressed for change so far is the teacher-student and student-student relationships. But it seems that if dropout is going to be reduced, then large scale district change is also needed. Bassin (1982) gives an excellent overview of a New York City school district's efforts to decrease dropout in their district. He shows how the district addressed the problem three ways: (a) by instituting a rigorous self-study of formal and informal policies that may contribute to dropout, (b) by instituting a data based management by objectives plan and accountability system to stop dropout, and (c) by forcing attention to the issue of dropout and involving the community as well as the school to work on the problem. Included in this overview is an accounting of each

approach's strengths and weaknesses with suggestions for improvement. These approaches could be used as a foundation for a district wishing to improve its dropout rate.

Conclusion/Discussion

Limitations

Our study has several limitations. The rural and urban populations were analyzed in different ways. No tests of significance were performed on the rural data. The rural analysis was based on descriptive statistics only. The original intention of our project included a comparison of the rural and urban populations in respect to factors contributing to dropout. However, a frequency analysis of the rural data revealed only 4 subjects who were vulnerable to dropout as defined by our criteria. In addition, the tests of significance that were performed on the urban population focused on several scale, unfortunately none of these scales, with the exception of Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory have a known reliability or validity. These scales were constructed on the basis of the literature review and other studies on the dropout problem.

Statistics

To restate our statistical results, significant relationships were discovered between dropout and school adjustment and dropout and sibling dropout. Our profile of the "stable" student after our study would include a positive school adjustment as measured by a school adjustment scale which includes the student's satisfaction with his education, interest in school, school attendance, school safety and supervision and discipline in school. The "stable" student would also be part of a family system

where the siblings have completed high school. The other variables which we examined did not show up in statistically significant results, although some correlations were suggested that might be elaborated in further studies. For example, a slight relationship is suggested between dropout and low self-esteem, dropout and Spanish language use, and dropout and low levels of parental supervision. If these relationships were proven significant with further study, the stable student profile would include a high level of self-esteem, English as the primary language in the home, and and a high level of parental supervision, (a reflection of parental awareness of school performance and student's activities).

In addition we found significant differences in the factors that urban and rural students perceive as contributing to dropout. Urban students emphasized family problems, money, employment, expulsion or suspension, attendance, language and illness as more important that the rural students. Meanwhile, rural students emphasized language and illness. Finally, we discovered that females were just as likely to drop out as males, and that year in school was not a significant indicator of risk for dropout. Of course, all of these findings need to be tested through replication of studies to insure their validity.

Discussion

Obviously, many factors can be isolated and used to describe the student who may drop out. The individual is affected by many influences: home, school, the work situation of his parents, and the laws of his society. These are related to Bronfenbrenner's concepts of micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem influences. The individual develops his self-concept continuously in interaction with all these systems. A good healthy

interaction will promote the development of a positive self-concept. An abrasive, alienating interaction will foster a negative self-concept and a history of failure and frustration. Certain groups in society are at a disadvantage because of the poor interface between their microsystem influences and the world in which they must compete. As they continue through their educational lives, this disparity between the various systems in which they live unfortunately results in a lowered self-concept because the interaction between the individual and his various systems will often be negative.

To review the independent variables of our study, we feel that drop-out may be related to the following: (a) effects of self-esteem, (b) career and school expectations, (c) family structures, and (d) language. Taken to the systems level, many of these variables combine to cause lowered self-esteem resulting from poor interaction between the individual and his particular system. This less than maximum utilization of the individual's capacity results in a lowered self-esteem which in turn results in lowered career expectations and lowered self-actualization. For Hispanics the interface between individual and the various systems is of such poor quality that adolescents are not able to compete in a college environment or to compete effectively in a job market which requires completion of education with acceptable grades. Each member of the system implicates the other. To coordinate a solution, each system needs to be aware of its impact on the individual child. The responsibility for the development of the child's maximum potential does not rest solely with one group. The school feels that the family is at fault, (cultural deprivation). The family feels that the school is not helpful. Society is tired of redistributing

money to ameliorate the problems of the disadvantaged further down the line. Work environments are alienating and dehumanizing for those who do not possess a skill level high enough to achieve interesting work. To coordinate a solution, each system needs to be aware of its impact on the individual child. The responsibility for the development of the child's maximum potential does not rest solely with one group or in any one system. The responsibility lies within each system to provide an environment in which the child can develop a healthy self-esteem which grows from a successful transition from system to system where the individual child can experience a healthy learning experience which nourishes his self-esteem which in turn broadens his expectations and possibilities for growth. The focus of each system's concern should not be who is to blame for the predicament of the Hispanic student, but rather, what can each system do to maximize the potential of their own environment to foster a healthy, quality experience for the individual student. Only in this way, can his/her self-esteem be build or as is sometimes the reality, be repaired.

As a society, we are committed to each individual becoming all of which he is capable of becoming. Some individuals are isolated in such a way that they are not capable of becoming all that is possible for them. School policies, family structures and environments, racist or insensitive organizations and laws, and general economic deprivation can all interact to limit the potential for the individual.

Predicting dropouts and producing policies and programs to prevent dropout from occurring is an excellent way for schools to increase their students' potential. We hope that our study will help school districts move in this direction.

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